

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 937

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: jsimmons@cfbt.com



26 March 2014

Mrs Christina Wilkinson
Headteacher
Oswaldtwistle St Andrew's Church of England Primary School
Springfield Street
Oswaldtwistle
Accrington
Lancashire
BB5 3LG

Dear Mrs Wilkinson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oswaldtwistle St Andrew's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 25 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- improve the quality of spelling throughout the school by ensuring that pupils use their knowledge of the relationship between letters and sounds when they attempt spellings, and that they develop an understanding of spelling patterns
- improve the consistency of pupils' letter formation and the quality of their written presentation.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the three teachers who comprise the teaching and learning team, four governors including the recently appointed Chair

and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection.

The school improvement plan was evaluated, along with a monitoring report produced by the teaching and learning team and records of progress of pupils currently in school. We made brief visits to all classes and I spoke to several pupils about their work.

Context

The Chair of the Governing Body at the time of the recent section 5 inspection has resigned and a new Chair has been appointed, along with a new Vice Chair. Governors are in the process of filling the one other governor vacancy. A new teacher took up post teaching one of the Reception classes in January 2014. The secondment of the acting deputy headteacher from another school has been continued. The appointment of a substantive deputy headteacher is scheduled to take place in April. Building work has begun on the school site to provide additional classrooms to accommodate the increased number of pupils following the raising of the school's standard admission number.

Main findings

The school was disappointed by the outcomes of its recent inspection but has accepted the need to improve and is taking concerted action to develop teaching and raise standards.

The headteacher has a clear understanding of the profile of teaching over time in all classes and is providing appropriate practical support and challenge to improve individual teachers' practice. She has high expectations and is taking staff with her on the journey towards realising these. The school's improvement plan addresses the key areas for improvement identified at the most recent inspection. The impact of actions taken is objectively reviewed.

The teaching and learning team is driving through some key initiatives to improve pupils' engagement and enhance their learning. They have introduced a reward scheme whereby pupils earn 'St Andrew's money' in recognition of particular behaviour, attitudes and work. This is proving popular with pupils and is helping develop their self-management skills; pupils are able to choose rewards and are developing an understanding of immediate and longer-term goals. They have a better understanding of their own targets and can generally explain the purpose of work they are undertaking. Not all pupils take pride in the presentation of their work or attend to their teachers' feedback sufficiently. School leaders are aware of this issue and are taking steps to improve pupils' responsiveness and attention to detail.

Teachers' planning has been refocused to ensure that work set for pupils is sufficiently challenging, including for higher-attaining pupils, and that real life links

enable learning to be contextualised. We observed Year 3 pupils were enjoying using their knowledge of number patterns and reflective symmetry to create rug designs that met specific criteria. Teachers are working in pairs to share their planning and report that their discussions with partners and peer support have been fruitful.

Classroom environments have been developed to both stimulate and celebrate pupils' learning. Classrooms have clear topic themes and have been made into more exciting places to learn. Some literacy and numeracy teaching is built around topics. Year 2 pupils have written postcards from pirate ships and solved mathematics problems about pirate treasure. A sensible balance is being struck, however, between topic links and other planning foci so that learning is kept fresh and interesting while expectations of skills development are met in age-appropriate ways.

Staff are working hard to develop a culture in which pupils relish reading. World Book Day was a great success and pupils are still talking enthusiastically about the various activities that teachers designed for them related to particular books. A longer-term 'reading reward trail' has been introduced that encourages and celebrates individual pupils' reading of different genres of books. The staff recognise the need to ensure that the teaching of reading is developed consistently and are doing this through various means, including using new technology.

The local authority has recently undertaken an external review of governance that has resulted in an action plan being produced to further develop the work of the governing body. The format of the headteacher's report to governors has been amended to make it more readily accessible, which enables governors' insightful questioning. Governors have links with different classes and receive regular presentations from the teaching and learning team which help them keep abreast of developments in school. The Chair of the Governing Body visits the school weekly to spend time in classrooms. Governors are leading the monitoring of separate strands of the action plan. They complete visit reports to ensure that they record their work with the school in a systematic way. Training delivered by the school improvement adviser has enabled governors to fully understand the school's performance information.

The school's internal tracking indicates that pupils' progress is accelerating overall, including for higher-attaining pupils. Pupils are being taught to be more resilient when working in test conditions in order that they can complete the required work independently. Teachers are working together to ensure that their assessment of pupils' skills is consistent. There is no endemic area of weakness in the school's current performance in terms of subjects, although there is some variability in progress in reading, writing and mathematics across classes. The school's leaders are driving to ensure consistency and there is clear evidence of staff pulling together as a united team to overcome weaknesses and share effective practice.

The headteacher has taken the decision to move staff to different classes in the new academic year so as to achieve the best blend of skills to meet pupils' needs. Teachers are being effectively prepared to make these changes successful.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The support and challenge from the local authority school improvement adviser has been complemented by the work of an adviser from its monitoring and intervention team. These colleagues have provided additional training for governors, supported the headteacher's improvement planning, led staff meetings and validated the school's self-evaluation. A teaching and learning consultant from the local authority is providing individual support to teachers to strengthen aspects of their practice. The local authority has linked St Andrew's with a local school that was recently judged to be good. This link is proving beneficial in enabling the sharing of good practice in the design of the learning environment and in improvements to the quality of pupils' work recorded in their books. The local authority has involved the school in an initiative aimed at narrowing the gaps in attainment between pupils eligible for pupil premium and their peers. This has included additional training for teaching assistants; it is too early to evaluate the impact of this work on achievement.

The support provided to the school is well-judged and proportionate to the school's needs, whilst enabling school leaders' autonomy. In addition to the support provided by the local authority, the headteacher has established a relationship with an outstanding school and has commissioned a literacy consultant to assist staff with planning.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and the Director of Education for Blackburn Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall

Her Majesty's Inspector